Conquering the world with "cutting-edge curricula"
Global Citizens learning East Asian languages

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1. Introduction

Leiden University is currently attempting to attract more students by offering new internationally flavoured academic programmes at BA and MA level with "cutting-edge and globally conscious curricula" (Goto-Jones 2012), such as *International Studies*, *Human Interaction*, *International Development, History*, *Arts & Culture of Asia*, and *Politics, Society & Economy of Asia*. Unlike "traditional" *Languages and Cultures* ('talen en culturen') programmes, with a heavy language learning component, these novel curricula focus on "content", while offering a lighter version of optional/required language study usually ranging from 10 to 40 EC (European Credits)[1]. English being the unquestioned lingua franca and language of instruction in these programmes, foreign language modules offer a taste of other languages related to the area of study, including "Non-Indo-European/Non-Latin Alphabet" languages such as Japanese and/or official United Nations languages (e.g. Mandarin Chinese and Arabic).

If we assume that language and communication competencies needed by professionals to be able to function in a working environment using a second/foreign language need to be at the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) level of "Independent User" B1–B2[2] or above, an obvious question emerges: Which levels are attainable in foreign language education within the given parameters in languages such as Japanese and Mandarin Chinese? The purpose of this paper is to examine these questions, with a particular focus on Japanese as an example case. In the following section this examination is first contextualized by a brief introduction into developments in the teaching and learning of East Asian languages in Europe. An overview of recent *Eurobarometer* language surveys, selected European Union and Council of Europe initiatives and more localized policy documents addressing foreign language education policies and practices follows in section 3. Reference is also made to the role of motivational factors identified by language learners themselves. Finally, section 4 will examine how short introductions into languages such as Japanese are conceived in terms of language competency target levels and to what extent European models can actually be applied.

2. New directions in European language education: Rising Asia?

As Salverda (2002: 5) notes, "[o]f the total number of languages in the world, [...] just ten languages are spoken as their first or second language by some 3.7 billion people around the world: five European languages (English, Spanish, Russian, Portuguese and French) and five non-European lan-

guages (Chinese, Hindi, Bengali, Arabic and Japanese)." Europe aspires for multilingualism and its language policies have long emphasized the role of languages spoken within the borders of the European Union, but recently the needs of an increasingly globalized market economy have triggered language policy formulations including references also to major non-European languages such Japanese and (Mandarin) Chinese. Following China's robust economic growth, outcries for more education particularly in Chinese are heard from influential stakeholders. In Finland, for example, a game company that created an internationally known hit game and operates also in China now lends its *Angry Birds* for a Mandarin Chinese language project (Yanzu 2012). In the Netherlands, Mandarin Chinese high school language instructor education has been initiated, and in Sweden the Minister of Education Jan Björklund went as far as to remark that he wants Sweden to be the first European country to introduce Chinese as a foreign language in all junior and senior high schools (Edelhom 2011). Acknowledging that only a very small fraction of the world's living languages are actually spoken on European soil, Europe-centred language planning rhetoric is starting to shift towards a more global paradigm of educational linguistic diversity.

Following the rapid growth of its economy, China began establishing Confucius Institutes, or "non-profit public institutions" aiming to "promote Chinese language and culture", in 2004 (Confucius Institute 2009). Five years later, at the end of 2009, there were already 94 such institutes in Europe and more than 320 worldwide. Mandarin Chinese is now enjoying increasing popularity as an optional foreign language in European schools, starting at the first year of primary education, as exemplified by Meilahti primary school in the Finnish capital of Helsinki (Meilahden ala-asteen koulu 2012). Likewise, the number of learners of Japanese has been rising steadily and currently the language is studied by roughly three million people around the globe (Japan Foundation 2009). While most learners of Japanese are located in other Asian countries, Oceania and North America, the language of hugely popular *manga* (Japanese comics) and *anime* (Japanese animated films) is attracting increasing attention also on the old continent.

In European higher education, Oriental/Asian Studies have traditionally been the cradle of Asian language learning. To a large extent, students' interests have now shifted from philology-oriented translation, annotation and explanation of ancient texts towards up-to-date themes with societal relevance, currently equally explored by disciplines outside the "Non-Western" spheres of higher learning. On a strategic institutional level, this tendency is on par with a transition from Oriental Studies to (thematic/disciplinary) Area Studies, which is high on the agenda of European institutes of higher learning. Even those with centuries-old traditions in the field rename and reorganize their academic programmes, also to allow for more students to take up Asian Studies without the traditionally heavy language learning component. Under a broad "Asia" label, programmes of this type can, for example, offer thematic tracks interconnecting across geographical areas, such as *History, Arts and Cultures* or *Politics, Society*

and Economy (of Asia). The "Wikipedia student generation" also appears to be increasingly attracted to even wider perspectives; new undergraduate and graduate level academic programmes or tracks such as *Global Citizenship* emerge and, accordingly, institutional reorganizations result in departments of *Global* or *World Cultures* being formed. Discourses on disciplinarity and multi-/inter-disciplinarity spark heated academic debates, as formulations for fresh, modern, and globally relevant visions of Area Studies are sought.

In this climate, from an administrator's perspective, academic language instruction faces the danger of being considered as time-consuming and expensive, requiring small multiple parallel groups, numerous instructors, and several contact teaching hours per week. While getting rid of language components not only helps to save costs, an increasing number of administrators also seem to believe that speedy study progress and timely graduation are best achieved without extensive language learning requirements. Thus incoming students can choose to graduate for example from a 1-year MA programme in Asian Studies without any knowledge of a language relevant to the target area. However, in order to cater to as many potential students as possible (and to keep study tracks without the epithet "global/international" still alive?), students may have the option to take a beginner's level modern language course in a "non-Indo-European/non-Latin alphabet language" such as Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Tibetan, or Arabic (International Studies 2012).

3. Language learning in Europe and motivations for Japanese language study: Economy vs individual

To gain a better idea of the role and positioning of these "Non-Indo-European/Non- Latin Alphabet" languages within the educational context of the language modules to be examined below, I first briefly explore examples of public discourses on language education policy and planning with regard to non-European languages in Europe and the Netherlands. The examined documents include samples of European Union and Council of Europe initiatives and policy documents, surveys to address language education policies and practices, and a recent policy document of the Dutch Education Council on foreign language education in schools (Onderwijsraad 2008). Despite the dominating role of English in these discourses, the languages of neighbouring countries, in the Dutch context German and French, continue to play an important role in language education policies. However, when the focus is shifted to future language needs, a very different picture emerges: the languages of the most immediate European trading partners give way to Russian, (Brazilian) Portuguese, Hindi and (Mandarin) Chinese.[3]

The latest European Commission *Eurobarometer* public opinion surveys, which address European language education policies and practices, illustrate that European citizens have increasingly positive attitudes towards learning foreign languages (Directorate General for Education and Culture 2006). While knowledge of foreign languages was considered favourably

by 70% of the respondents in 2001, five years later this percentage had risen to 83%. Interestingly, such positive attitudes appear to parallel a rising tendency to associate language learning with professional opportunities and advancement. Thus, a shift from "soft" values linked to language learning, such as personal development, intercultural awareness, creativity and innovation, or European values (e.g. "feeling more European") to instrumental ones can be detected (Länsisalmi 2012a). Similar formulations can be found in policy makers' and stakeholders' discourses: "European companies continue to *lose business* because they cannot speak their customers' languages; they need to improve their skills in languages, including those of non-European trading partners" (Commission of the European Communities 2002). These views are echoed by the Dutch Education Council, similarly underscoring the economic perspective and market value of foreign languages.[4] Judging from *Eurobarometer* surveys, the range of non-European languages mastered by European citizens is, however, very limited. As the Commission of the European Communities (2002: 6) puts it, "this narrow range of foreign languages could make it difficult for European businesses to achieve their full potential in a multilingual market place." In the globalizing world, mastery of non-European languages is becoming an indispensable economic asset (Skutnabb-Kangas 2002: 17). Speaking Japanese or Chinese makes it easier to sell goods to the Japanese- or Chinese-speaking public "and thereby gives rise to higher profits" (Grin 2002: 21).

As was illustrated above – along with Russian, (Brazilian) Portuguese and Arabic – (Mandarin) Chinese, in particular, is receiving attention as an increasingly important future language in European language education discourses. While economy-driven discourses pave the way for Mandarin Chinese, interestingly, the main purpose for studying Japanese still appears to be a simple personal interest in the language itself (58%), followed by needs for "communication" (55%). "Learning about *manga* [Japanese comics], *anime* [Japanese animated films], etc." is also mentioned by 50% of the respondents of a language education survey carried out in 2009 (Japan Foundation 2009). On the other hand, "future employment", a "utility-based tendency", is mentioned as a motivational factor by 43% and is, together with "interest in Japanese language", up more than 15 percentage points since the previous survey in 2006. Similarly, "current work", another employment-related argument, has risen to 18%. Employment, though, is likely to be a more important reason for Japanese language study in areas such as East Asian countries and the Pacific region than in Europe. Although employment-related arguments thus seem to be increasing, Japanese also still has "non-market value": a student of Japanese may, for example, be interested in learning the (youth) language as depicted in *manga* or *anime*, possibly even providing own translations of Japanese originals on various fansub (fan-subtitled) sites, or engaging in *kosupure* ("cosplay" i.e. costume play) as a hobby. Or perhaps s/he is a "game geek", identifying with Japanese online *otaku* (people with obsessive interests) communities, or a fan of J-pop (Japanese pop music) or Gothic & Lolita (fashion-oriented subculture of young females) style, who follows related news via social media, belongs to fan clubs or communities, and orders products

online directly from Japan. The Japanese language thus responds to an individual preference structure, including contact with a subculture or an otherwise specific sphere of Japanese (youth) culture and community, rather than representing an economic interest with little less than instrumental value (Länsisalmi 2012a, 2012b).[5]

Using EU language education policy jargon, one could thus claim that the majority of Japanese as a Foreign Language (JFL) students may, indeed, be interested in learning Japanese as a "personal adoptive language" ("langue personnelle adoptive"/"persoonlijke adoptietaal", Maalouf et al. 2008: 10, Onderwijsraad 2008: 27) for reasons other than mere professional interests associated with economic advantages. According to policy makers, who themselves adopted the concept from Lebanese-born author Amin Maalouf and a group of other writers and philosophers, this "adopted language" would not normally be the one used for international communication. Rather it should be considered as a "second mother tongue"; Europeans having an unlimited choice to select "rare" languages spoken on distant continents as such "adopted languages" (Maalouf et al. 2008: 10-12). Although Maalouf and friends underline that learning "adopted languages" should be integrated in the school and higher education curricula of all European citizens,[6] in practice their cultural philosophical ideals are quickly run over by economic interests. Languages for which there is little demand – even when they are acknowledged as economically important – are excluded from public education and sidelined as non-curricular activities to be organized and offered by heterogeneous language schools and courses outside official curricula.[7]

4. Assessing language competence and setting targets: CEFR for all?

Following this lengthy contextualization, it is time to take a look at actual language education practices. If more Japanese and Mandarin Chinese learning opportunities are to be offered, an obvious question presents itself: Do European language education planners and administrators in charge of drafting "Non-Indo-European/Non-Latin Alphabet" language modules have a realistic idea of what a working language level in an East Asian language entails? While there appears to be some consensus that practical foreign language and communication competencies required in a working environment need to be at least at the CEFR level of "Independent User" B1–B2 or above[8], European policy documents seldom – if ever – make reference to the inapplicability of such requirements to "Non-Indo-European/Non-Latin Alphabet" languages. By contrast, instructors and researchers of languages such as Mandarin Chinese or Japanese are quick to point out the challenges that non-Western orthographic systems, possibly unfamiliar grammatical structures, and the lack of cognates between learners' L1 and L2 present to a balanced development of oral proficiency and literacy in these languages in European language education contexts. As Mori and Mori (2011: 466) remark, "ideas based on the instruction of commonly taught European languages cannot be easily or speedily

adapted to JFL contexts." Thus a question emerges: How can the common European yardstick, the CEFR can-do formulations, be applied to languages such as Japanese and Mandarin Chinese?

As a partial response to this, the Japan Foundation (JF), an organization supervised by the Japanese Foreign Ministry specializing in international cultural exchange, released in 2010 the *JF Standard for Japanese Language Education* (http://jfstandard.jp), which is modelled on the proficiency level-based can-do statements of the CEFR. As the following brief examples illustrate, however, the JF Standard is not identical to its European counterpart. Compare for example CEFR Reading and Writing competency can-do statements at level B1 with the corresponding level in the JF Standard. Alongside more fine-grained can-do statements, the CEFR proposes very general "umbrella descriptors" for different skills, including the following for B1-level Reading and Writing (British Council 2012):

- Can read straightforward factual texts on subjects related to his/her field and interest with a satisfactory level of comprehension.
- Can write straightforward connected texts on a range of familiar subjects within his field of interest, by linking a series of shorter discrete elements into a linear sequence.

The JF Standard, on the other hand, does not include such B1-level "umbrella statements" or general descriptors; rather reading and writing skills are linked only to very specific and concrete contexts, themes and types of texts. Can-do statements include for example reading letters and e-mails from family and friends on topics related to travelling or expression of gratitude and recent personal news. Writing, on the other hand, refers to short pieces such as activity reports, blog entries or comments on a website, business trip overviews, simple letters to the editor about environmental issues, or cooking recipes (JF Standard for Japanese-Language Education 2012):

- Can read and understand a letter or e-mail from a friend written in some detail about feelings of gratitude and recent news, and understand most of the content.
- Can write in some detail for a friend a recipe, if one is familiar with the dish.

While the JF Standard makes no promises about any *general* abilities to understand factual texts or write cohesive and coherent texts at B1 level, more focus is put on abilities to locate relevant information, again in very specific contexts, such as job requirements and descriptions, travel magazines and guide books, information on illnesses and preventive methods and treatment, shopping (comparison of different products), and education (course syllabi), for example:

- Can look through texts of some length in, for example, a travel magazine or guide book, and find the information necessary to decide on a destination, such as the features of famous sights and local specialties.[9]

Even while considering such limitations formulated in the JF Standard,

reaching the CEFR level B1 in short "Non-Indo-European/Non-Latin Alphabet" language modules seems like a relatively unrealistic target. If we take as a concrete example a 15-EC (10 + 5 EC) Beginner's Japanese module, such as the one currently offered in the 1-year Asian Studies Master's programmes at Leiden University, it can be hypothesized that the number of credits translates roughly into 420 hours of student work (1 EC = 28 h). By the end of this intensive module, students are expected to acquire approximately 1,700 basic words and 317 Chinese *kanji* characters[10], including 254 of the 284 *kanji* listed for Level 3 of the international Japanese Language Proficiency Test JLPT (as administered until 2010). The JLPT, until 2010 consisting of four levels, Level 4 being the lowest and Level 1 the highest one, has been offered since 1984 as "a reliable means of evaluating and certifying the Japanese proficiency of non-native speakers" by the Japan Foundation and the public service foundation Japan Educational Exchanges and Services JEES.[11] As it has been estimated that JFL learners without prior Chinese kanji character knowledge need to study for approximately 500–750 hours in order to be able to pass the JLPT "intermediate" Level 3 (*kanji* ~300; vocabulary ~1,500), attaining this level within the 420 hours allocated for a 15-EC module seems challenging (JLEC 2010). On the other hand, reaching the highest level of the JLPT, Level 1 (*kanji* ~2,000; vocabulary ~10,000), common requirement for university studies in Japan, is estimated to require as many as 3,100–4,500 hours of active studying.

A new format of the JLPT was introduced two years ago, now consisting of five proficiency levels instead of the previous four, with a new level bridging the former Levels 3 and 2. The new Level N4 now corresponds roughly to the old Level 3 as explained above. Basically only receptive skills are tested and linguistic competence required for each level of the test is currently expressed in terms of language activities, for Level N4, "the ability to understand basic Japanese", in the following manner (JLPT 2012):

- Reading: One is able to read and understand passages on familiar daily topics written in basic vocabulary and kanji.
- Listening: One is able to listen and comprehend conversations encountered in daily life and generally follow their contents, provided that they are spoken slowly.[12]

How do these JLPT levels, then, correspond to CEFR levels, which are the indicators used in the European language education context? Let us examine that through another example, namely a Beginner's Japanese module planned in the new International Studies BA programme at Leiden University. The objectives of the first 10-EC module (280 h), consisting of 78 hours of contact lessons, are described using CEFR levels as target descriptors as follows: Speaking A1, Listening A1, Writing A1-, and Reading A2. The lowest CEFR level of A1 (or even A1-) is – in a modest but realistic manner – indicated for three of the four skills, only reading receiving the slightly more ambitious target level of A2 (International Studies 2012-2013). Given that the Japanese script is one of the most difficult challenges for JFL students without prior knowledge of logographic writing systems, reaching this target level in reading skills within roughly 280 hours of

study seems optimistic. As it is estimated that the current lowest JLPT level N5, "ability to understand some basic Japanese", necessitates approximately 250–400 hours of studying, will 280 be sufficient to reach the "Waystage" CEFR level of A2 in Japanese reading skills (JLEC 2010)?[13]

While JLPT N5-level reading proficiency is formulated as "one is able to read and understand typical expressions and sentences written in *hiragana*, *katakana* [moraic scripts], and basic *kanji*", the CEFR offers a much more demanding general descriptor for A2-level reading skills (British Council 2012):

CEFR Reading A2:

- Can understand short, simple texts on familiar matters of a concrete type which consists of high frequency everyday or *job-related* language (emphasis added).

The JF Standard, again, relies solely on more diversified statements (JF Standard for Japanese-Language Education 2012: 10-11).

JF Standard Reading A2:

- Can read an invoice that was sent by fax or e-mail after ordering office supplies, and check if there are any mistakes in the order details.
- Can read and understand a short, simple postcard or e-mail from one's family or friends about what happened during a trip, and get a general idea of the content.
- Can read a letter or e-mail of thanks from a friend written in short, simple sentences, and get a general idea of the content.
- Can read short simple newspaper articles or other pieces of writing about a favorite sport and understand some pieces of information such as the outcome of a game and a favorite player's performance.
- Can read short simple articles, such as one in a school newspaper reporting about festivals and other school events, and understand some pieces of information such as turnout and descriptions of the day.
- Can read a four-frame comic strip and mostly understand the content, if the dialogue is written in simple terms.
- Can read a short simple explanation on, for example, a signboard in a campground, and understand some pieces of information, such as prohibitions and precautions.

Further information on proficiency levels, namely what JLPT examinees themselves think they can do, is offered by a recent self-evaluation survey (The Japan Foundation & Japan Educational Exchanges and Services 2012). At the lowest JLPT level N5, the highest percentage regarding reading skills, with 50–75% of the respondents agreeing, was scored by the statement "I can understand my appointment day and time from appointment reservation charts at my school, etc.". 25–50% of the respondents indicated that they can "read and understand New Year's and birthday cards", "simple memos", or "simple instructions with pictures (e.g. how to put out trash, how to prepare meals)". By contrast, less than 25% of those who

passed the lowest N5 level of the test think that they can, for example

- understand post cards and e-mails from (...) acquaintances and friends,
- get necessary information from the brochures of products (e.g. product features, etc.),
- get necessary information from travel guidebooks and magazines about entering university or finding jobs, or
- understand the content of articles in newspapers and magazines written about familiar everyday topics.

If we consider these statements to correspond somewhat to the CEFR A2-level reading descriptor mentioned above, it is noteworthy to notice that, only at the second-most highest N2 Level of the JLPT, 25–50% of the examinees think that they can finally agree with them. Incidentally, the N2 Level is currently hypothesized as the target level of the 60-EC (1,680 h) language acquisition programme in the *Japan Studies* (in Dutch: *Japanstudies*) BA programme at Leiden university.

5. Conclusions: Balancing the academic "toolbox"

Though very brief, this overview hopefully suffices to demonstrate that modelling "Non-Indo-European/Non-Latin Alphabet" language education curricula in the European context necessitates thorough knowledge of the pedagogical challenges presented by said languages.[14] For a learner of Japanese or Mandarin Chinese, even looking up unknown words in a dictionary presupposes an advanced understanding of radicals (character subelements) and compositional features of Chinese characters. As reading and writing skills are intrinsically linked to character knowledge, attaining reading or writing proficiency levels useful in professional contexts without learning hundreds or even thousands of characters is impossible.[15]

What can a graduate then do with his/her CEFR A1–A2-level Japanese or Mandarin Chinese? If not read Japanese or Chinese professional documents or a newspaper, at least acquire an elementary (oral) communicative competence greatly valued by native speakers of these languages and gain a solid understanding of what mastering such a "Non-Indo-European/Non-Latin Alphabet" language, including socio-cultural and -pragmatic features, entails. The importance of such understanding, as well as in-depth analyses of the knowledge to be transmitted and the pedagogical approaches to be used, cannot be over-emphasized in the current academic climate aspiring for "cutting-edge and globally conscious curricula".

Maintaining a purposeful balance in the academic "toolbox" offered by Asian/Area/International Studies programmes as well as convincing aspiring students, budget holders and other stakeholders of its present and future value and validity is the task at hand. Securing a place for Asian languages in European "Asia literacy" is a common undertaking for European scholars and students alike. Hopefully this brief contribution can facilitate that process.

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1 For example in the International Studies BA programme offered by Leiden University, up to 55 EC of foreign language study is possible, if a 30-EC "Discretionary Space" in year 3 is devoted solely to language learning. As the programme was launched only in 2012, at present intermediate/advanced language courses are not yet offered by the degree.

2 E.g. the language education recommendations of professionally oriented universities of applied sciences/polytechnics in Finland align BA graduates' language proficiency targets in a foreign language with level 6 of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) (Ammattikorkeakoulujen kielten ja viestinnän asiantuntijatyöryhmä 2011). In Ireland the NFQ level 6 is aligned with CEFR level B2 (National Qualifications Authority of Ireland 2007: 7).

3 “Opkomende economieën (Brazilië, Rusland, India en China): vraag naar deze talen? [...] De verwachting is dat taalbeheersing in de Chinese taal in de toekomst *een pré zal zijn op de arbeidsmarkt*.” (Onderwijsraad 2008: 22-23)

4 “Wil Nederland blijven meekomen in de internationale economie, dan is het nodig dat meer Nederlanders meer vreemde talen spreken. [...] *Economisch perspectief centraal:* ontstaan wereldeconomie.” (Onderwijsraad 2008: 11-12)

5 At present little is known about the impact of popular culture fandom upon the learning of foreign languages (Mori & Mori 2011). Cf. “De verwachting is dat taalbeheersing in de Chinese taal in de toekomst *een pré zal zijn op de arbeidsmarkt*.” (Onderwijsraad 2008: 23)

6 “Apprise intensément, couramment parlée et écrite, elle serait intégrée dans le cursus scolaire et universitaire de tout citoyen européen, ainsi que dans le curriculum professionnel de chacun.
Son apprentissage s’accompagnerait d’une familiarisation avec le ou les pays où cette langue est pratiquée, avec la littérature, la culture, la société et l’histoire liées à cette langue et à ses locuteurs.” (Maalouf et al. 2008: 11)

7 “Gaat het om een taal die (bijna) iedereen zou moeten kennen, dan verdient deze een plek in het onderwijs: Engels, Duits en Frans, Spaans, Hindi, Russisch, Turks, Chinees. Gaat het om een taal waarbij het voldoende is dat een klein aantal deze beheerst, dan kan het taalonderwijs ook buiten het initieel onderwijs plaatsvinden, met (financiële) steun van de overheid. [...] Vreemdetalenonderwijs buitenschools: Er lijkt vooralsnog weinig vraag te zijn naar talen die wellicht van groeiend economisch belang zijn, zoals Chinees, Arabisch en Japans.” (Onderwijsraad 2008: 65, 116)

8 See fn. 1 above. Cf. “[...] drie kwart van de jongere bevolking spreekt in 2019 twee vreemde talen op een niveau waarmee zij zich in de praktijk in uiteenlopende situaties kunnen redden. In termen van het Europees referentiekader is dat het B1-niveau” (Onderwijsraad 2008: 76, cf. 58). What should, in fact, be added to the general can-do levels in *professional* contexts is also proficiency in field specific and inter-discursive discourse practices, namely the contextual conditions of the professions in which these languages are put to use: a wide repertoire of genres, contents, and working environments, where the language learner will be exercising his/her profession (Huhta 2010).

9 Furthermore a difference is made in the can-do statement formulations between *yomu* ‘to read’ and *yomitoru* ‘to read and understand’ (lit. ‘read-take’).

10 The remarkably complex Japanese writing system, originally borrowed from China, is at present a hybrid of moraic *kana* syllabaries (*hiragana* and *katakana*) and Chinese *kanji* characters.

11 In 2011, the test was taken by 610,000 examinees around the world. For more information, see: http://www.jlpt.jp/e/about/purpose.html.

12 It is further added that “[w]hile not noted in the table, Language Knowledge, such as Vocabulary and Grammar, is also required for successful execution of these activities.” (JLPT 2012)

13 Cf. Bellassen (2012: 28-29), who points out that, while it is suggested by the organizers that the new HSK Chinese Proficiency Test Level 3 corresponds to CEFR level B1, a more realistic indicator is in fact CEFR A1–A2.

14 Whether learning targets can best be described by dissecting phases and contexts of language learning into can-do “particles of language” and appreciating proficiency levels as “products” are additional questions, which need to be elaborated at another occasion (cf. Huhta 2010). As Bourguignon (2012: 63) remarks: “Focusing on the levels prevents all languages from fitting into the CEFR, which is thus turned into a ‘frame’, yet focusing on the concepts is to consider CEFR for what it was supposed to be, that is a ‘framework’ for a commonly acceptable approach that can become the cornerstone of plurilingualism.” Cf. Blommaert & Backus (2012: 4, 29).

15 Cf. also handwriting vs keyboarding, i.e. production of characters using pen and paper vs knowledge of the Latin alphabet-based “phonetic form” needed for computer input systems (Bellassen 2011).